
Applications and Resumes

from the Offender Re-Entry Guide

This section of the Offender Re-Entry Guide is included here by permission from Corrections Clearinghouse, a project of the Washington State Employment Security Department. Corrections Clearinghouse provides training and technical assistance to assist offenders obtain employment and successfully integrate to the community.

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"How Do I Go About Applying for a Job?"

"How shall I prepare?"

"What will I have to complete before I begin seeking employment interviews?"

"Nothing ever happens until the paperwork is done right."

"Imagine looking at yourself on paper. Would an employer want to meet you?"

Objectives:

- Complete a master application for employment.
- Prepare a formatted resume and "Quick" card worksheet.
- Learn how to write a cover letter.

Overview:

Many people think completing an employment application is a simple process. In reality it is a screening device, used by employers to weed out applicants who don't follow directions, pay attention to details, or worry about neatness. The way an application is completed reflects one's willingness to take time to turn in a quality product, and shows the person's consideration for the reader. An application is really a pre-employment test. When a person doesn't complete it as requested, it may end up being discarded. On the other hand, a well-done application can lead to an immediate interview. There are documented cases of jobs being created for people, just because their applications were so attractive.

You have to look good on paper to receive the consideration you want.

Applications

The application is the tool most familiar to job seekers. It contains questions about a job seeker's personal and work related data. It may also be the employer's first impression of the job seeker. Therefore, for the ex-offender it is very important that this information be filled out correctly and completely.

Remember: your first impression is a lasting impression and you can't change that. You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Employers will also use applications as a screening device, a way to eliminate undesirable applicants from consideration. They will also usually refer to the application during the interview. The application may become the basis for most of the interview questions. The application will also allow employers the opportunity to compare the applicants.

It is easy to be untruthful on the application; however, many employers will fire you if they find out that you lied about any important item on your application. All information you provide on a job application can be checked and verified. When you sign your application you are saying it is all true and approving that the employer can verify it, and most do.

In preparing your application for employment you may believe that because of your incarceration and/or lack of work history, your application may not contain enough information to even be considered for employment. No matter what you did before incarceration or during incarceration that society would consider a negative; you must look beneath the surface to find the positives that you can use in a legal employment situation. You must consider everything you did on the inside, and pull out from each, as many abilities, skills, and strengths as possible.

Take a look at some examples of activities listed below and see what strengths (positives) you can pull from these.

Involvement In An Athletic Event or Sport = team player; competitive spirit; think quickly on your feet; display confidence; self motivation; quick learner; outgoing personality; good physical condition; adapt easily to new situation; handle stress well.	Arts & Crafts = can produce on a team or individual situation; handle responsibility; need little or no supervision; very good with hands; detail oriented; a fast learner; emphasis on quality.	Clubs = speaking well before large or small audiences; a leader; take initiative; can follow directions; know how to delegate responsibilities; can be counted on to complete assigned tasks; organized.	Counseling = good listener; can explain information and thoughts clearly; open to new ideas; can admit to and learn from making mistakes; enjoy discussions with others.
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There may be many other strengths that you can think of for each of the above activities; these are just possibilities. Remember to look at all positive activities as an opportunity to improve your application.

What Employers Look for When Hiring

Employers ranked these factors that they consider in making hiring decisions, and what they consider most important.

Attitude -----	46%
Communication Skills -----	42%
Previous Work Experience-----	40%
Recommendations from Current Employees -----	34%
Previous Employer Recommendations -----	34%
Industry-based Credentials -----	32%
(Verifying Applicant's Skill) Years of Completed Schooling	29%
Scores on Test Administered as Part of the Interview----	25%
Academic Performance-----	25%
Experience or Reputation of Applicant's School -----	24%
Teacher Recommendations -----	21%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau National Survey)

What Is It That Employers Want Most of All?

Employers are looking for an employee who is job-ready and who possesses basic skills. Employers also want employees who will continue to show those desirable characteristics every day on the job.

A Good Employee is One Who:

1. Learns easily	9. Negotiates conflicts
2. Reads and writes well	10. Works as a team member
3. Uses computers well	11. Is organized
4. Listens carefully and speaks coherently	12. Exercises leadership
5. Strives for career development	13. Sets goals
6. Thinks creatively	14. Is self-motivated
7. Solves problems	15. Maintains self esteem
8. Gets along with others	16. Life long learner

(Source: Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want, U.S. Department of Labor and American Society for Training and Development.)

Classes You Took While Incarcerated

Stating that you took Victims Awareness implies that you had victims. Stating that you took Stress and Anger Management implies that you have had difficulty managing your anger. These listings would raise red flags for any employer. Instead, word things in business language. For example, you could say that you took:

- Interpersonal Skills
- Communication Skills
- Self Management Skills
- GED
- Life Skills

Be sure to list the community college that offered the class, not the correctional institution where the class was located. Corrections Clearinghouse classes should be listed by their name; Job Hunter, Work Ethics, Job Dynamics. State that the class was completed through the Washington State Employment Security Department.

Reason for Leaving Last Employer

Many offenders have lost jobs because of being arrested or being fired or failing a drug test or not showing up for work. When listing your reasons for leaving, do not say that you were fired, quit, or that you were arrested and taken away. Below are examples of reasons for leaving that do not raise red flags of concern.

- Personal (now resolved)
- Will explain at interview
- Laid off or reduction in force
- Relocated
- Job ended
- Seasonal position
- Transportation issue (now resolved)
- Lack of hours/work
- Career Change
- Promoted
- Took time off to care for an ill family member
- Family reasons (now resolved)

Be sure to use the reason that fits your unique circumstance. Remember, you must still be prepared to provide an explanation when asked in an interview.

Filling Out Job Applications**Disclosing a Felony Conviction**

It is particularly important for offenders to be truthful in filling out applications. However, the truth must be told in a way for the offender to get screened-in and invited to a face-to-face interview.

Question:

“Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, it is recommended that the offender fill out the question as follows:

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain: Will explain at interview, I can be bonded.

Below are some compelling reasons to answer the question in this way.

- It allows you to be honest, yet protects your privacy by controlling who knows about the specific conviction.
- Stating that the felony is not job related and that the applicant is bondable may help to calm the employer's fears and perhaps even pique the employer's curiosity enough to call you in for an interview.
- Many Community Supervision Officers will tell an employer whether you have a felony or not.
- If an employer is going to find out, it is better to hear it from you.
- You control the flow of information - how it's worded, how it's presented.
- Once hired, you don't have to be constantly looking over your shoulder afraid someone will find out.
- Most employers do background checks.
- In the interview, you can talk about how productive you were in prison.
- Employers can take advantage of Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and bonding.

Below is a list of other options to answering this question and probable consequences.

Check ‘YES’ and write the conviction. The candidate would likely be screened out and would lose privacy because anyone in the office who saw the application would know about the conviction.

Leave the question blank and/or put N/A. The application would appear incomplete and it would appear that the applicant is hiding something. When disclosing the felony at the interview, it would be awkward to explain why the questions are not filled in truthfully.

Check "NO" and lie. This appears to be the easiest route for many offenders and may help you get a job for the short term, but the longer-term consequences destroy any short-term gain. Consequences include:

- Not being hired because the lie was found out.
- Being fired as soon as the background check comes back.
- Carrying around emotional baggage wondering when you will be found out.
- Reinforcing offender stereotypes.
- Prosecution - especially if offender applied for a federal job.

Most employers do background checks before employees are promoted. So if an offender lied on the application, stayed with the company for a few years, became eligible for promotion, and the lie was exposed, the offender could:

- Lose a good job.
- Lose a good reference.
- Lose financial stability.
- Lose self-esteem.

Question:

Have you been convicted of a crime within the past ten years that directly relates to the position for which you are applying? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the crime you have been convicted of has no direct relationship to the position for which you are applying you may answer "no". However, if the answer is "yes" you should mark "yes".

Example: You were convicted of forgery, and you are applying for a job as a bank teller. You would answer " yes," because your conviction has a direct relationship to the bank teller position.

Question:

What should I write if the question about conviction asks me to "explain"?

Always write "will explain at interview". This will keep everyone who may view your application from knowing your personal business.

Question:

How do I cover time in prison on the "Work Experience" portion of the application?

List only 2 or 3 of the jobs that may be in line with your future employment goals. If you did any work during your incarceration (i.e., janitor, cook, clerk, and or firefighter) submit the jobs you gained significant hands-on experience. During your incarceration, choose the jobs to describe that reflect skills gained, abilities developed, and accomplishments earned.

Example: If you worked both in the kitchen and as a janitor while incarcerated, you would indicate both jobs for your incarceration period and list only the year for dates of employment even though you may have moved from facility to facility and from job to job.

Question:

How do I complete the “business name”?

Use the abbreviated name of jail or corrections facility

Example: If you worked as a janitor, cook, painter, etc., you worked for the abbreviation of the Jail or Corrections Facility. Chelan County Regional Justice Center = Chelan Co. RJC; Washington Corrections Center = Washington CC.

Question:

How about completing the “salary” portion of Job Experience?

You should complete wage or salary by stating "stipend" on your application.

Example: Salary Stipend hourly N/A. See the example that follows.

At the time of the interview you will be prepared to discuss your incarceration (page 92).

Question:

What about completing the “address” portion of Job History?

Do not use P.O. Boxes. Use only the city and state as the address, or only list the street address of the institution. The reason is that some people associate “P.O. Boxes” with prison in certain towns.

Question:

What about phone numbers for previous employers?

Obtain permission to list your last work supervisor’s direct contact phone number. If you don’t know it, research it, write a letter for the phone number and request permission from the person responsible who oversaw your work or duties. If it’s not possible to obtain a direct phone number to an individual list the main phone number of the facility, or as a last resort list "unknown" as the contact phone number.

If previous private employers are “no longer in business” state that as the phone number. Collecting accurate phone numbers is important to make it easy for the employer to verify past jobs. If it’s too difficult the employer may get frustrated and by-pass the rest of your application moving to the next one.

Question:

How to complete the “reason for leaving” portion of Work Experience?

Correct responses can be “Relocated,” “Contract ended,” “Transferred,” or “Pursued other opportunities.”

What follows is an example of a Work Experience response. Please note the reason for completing the “Work Experience” portion this way is to get your application past whomever may be screening applications for interviews. It is vital that your “Work Experience” is complete, yet, don’t advertise your incarceration. That information is only between you and the interviewer not anyone who may see your application.

Example: WORK EXPERIENCE SECTION
Name: Twin Rivers CC or County RJC
Address: Monroe, Washington
Supervisor: N/A
Dates: From June 1, 1988 to June 30, 1989
Position: Cook Rate of pay: Stipend per N/A
Reason for leaving: Relocated

References

References are people you know who can tell employers about who you are and what you can do. References confirm the information on your employment application and/or resume. They also support your character, skills, accomplishments, and work habits. Having good things that are said about you from another person is reassuring to the employer. Ask permission before listing a person as a reference, and OK to refer an employer to call them. Ask your references for their business cards to have all their correct contact information.

The references you list on your job application and/or resume will more than likely receive a telephone call from prospective employers. **Make sure you talk with your reference in advance**, so they will prepare for the employer's call. Keep your references up-to-date on all your job hunting activities, especially good news about going to work. Thank them sincerely for all their support and again ask them to continue being a reference as you compete for better jobs. A good reference is as good as gold.

Type of References

The people you choose to ask to be listed for references depend upon your experiences, job goals, and the position you're seeking. If you are an experienced worker use these references:

- Previous bosses and supervisors
- People you may have supervised
- Former fellow workers

If you are a job hunter re-entering the work force use these references:

- Members or leaders of groups you belong to (Community, Religious groups, etc.).
- Supervisors from a part-time or full-time jobs
- Teachers

If you are entering the work force for the first time use these references:

- Personal friends
- Counselors
- Teachers, doctors, lawyers
- Landlords
- People you have been involved with in volunteer projects

Employment Reference Worksheet

You should have at least three references that are not related to you.

1. Name of Reference: _____

Job Title: _____

Name of Company: _____

Work Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address (optional): _____

Fax Number: (optional): _____

Relationship to you: _____

2. Name of Reference: _____

Job Title: _____

Name of Company: _____

Work Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address (optional): _____

Fax Number: (optional): _____

Relationship to you: _____

3. Name of Reference: _____

Job Title: _____

Name of Company: _____

Work Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address (optional): _____

Fax Number: (optional): _____

Relationship to you: _____

Master Application for Employment

Now with the detailed information you've collected prepare a sample master application, which will be what you'll use to start your job hunt. Fill out every question with the complete accurate information. Find all the addresses, dates, and required information now to prepare the sample master job application then keep it up-to-date.

Your fully completed master application has all the information to prepare any application consistently and quickly. Employers will require you complete their job application, this way you are ready to apply for any job opening you find right then and there.

SAMPLE MASTER APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Complete all information accurately, completely, and honestly. This application is incomplete without answers to all questions or N/A as not applicable.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name (Last)	(First)	(Middle Initial)	Home Telephone () -
Address (Mailing Address)	(City)	(State)	(Zip) Other Telephone () -
E-Mail Address (optional)		Are you legally entitled to work in the U.S.? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

POSITION

Position Or Type Of Employment Desired	Will Accept: <input type="checkbox"/> Part-Time <input type="checkbox"/> Full-Time <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary	Shift: <input type="checkbox"/> Day <input type="checkbox"/> Swing <input type="checkbox"/> Graveyard <input type="checkbox"/> Rotating
Are you able to perform the essential functions of the job you are applying for, with or without reasonable accommodation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Salary Desired	Date Available	

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

High School Graduate Or General Education (GED) Test Passed? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, list the highest grade completed						
College, Business School, Military (Most recent first)						
Name and Location	Dates Attended Month/Year	Credits Earned		Graduate	Degree & Year	Major or Subject
		Quarterly or Semester Hours	Other (Specify)			
	From			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	To					
	From			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	To					
	From			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	To					
	From			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	To					
Occupational License, Certificate or Registration		Number	Where Issued		Expiration Date	
Occupational License, Certificate or Registration		Number	Where Issued		Expiration Date	
Languages Read, Written or Spoken Fluently Other Than English						

VETERAN INFORMATION (Most recent)

Branch of Service	Date of Entry	Date of Discharge
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Have you been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony within the past ten- (10) years that might unfavorably affect your fitness for this job? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please explain.

SPECIAL SKILLS (List all pertinent skills and equipment that you can operate)

--

WORK EXPERIENCE (Most Recent First) (Include voluntary work and military experience)

Employer	Telephone Number () -	From (Month/Year)
Address		
Job Title	Number Employees Supervised	To (Month/Year)
Specific Duties		Hours Per Week
		Last Salary
		Supervisor
Reason For Leaving		May We Contact This Employer? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Employer	Telephone Number () -	From (Month/Year)
Address		
Job Title	Number Employees Supervised	To (Month/Year)
Specific Duties		Hours Per Week
		Last Salary
		Supervisor
Reason For Leaving		May We Contact This Employer? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Employer	Telephone Number () -	From (Month/Year)
Address		
Job Title	Number Employees Supervised	To (Month/Year)
Specific Duties		Hours Per Week
		Last Salary
		Supervisor
Reason For Leaving		May We Contact This Employer? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Employer	Telephone Number () -	From (Month/Year)
Address		
Job Title	Number Employees Supervised	To (Month/Year)
Specific Duties		Hours Per Week
		Last Salary
		Supervisor
Reason For Leaving		May We Contact This Employer? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

I certify the information contained in this application is true, correct, and complete. I understand that, if employed, false statements reported on this application may be considered sufficient cause for dismissal.

My Personal References: Name, title, company, and complete address, phone number, relation to you.

1.	
2.	
3.	



Resumes and "Quick" Cards

Resumes are used by most job seekers as a means of advertising their qualities. The purpose is to spark an employer's interest enough to be interviewed. Simply, you are making an impression on paper for the opportunity to personally convince a business to hire you. You want to meet the employer face-to-face!

A resume is an individual statement that communicates abilities, skills, education, training, experience, plans, attitudes and character. These traits are presented in a style that indicates this person will meet the employer expectations. The effort also demonstrates preparation, organization and seriousness.

Your resume doesn't need to be overly complicated or full of unnecessary information. But, like an application, **the resume is often an employer's first impression** so it should be a good one. The appearance of the resume is as important as its content. The resume needs to be neat, easy to read and should not contain grammatical or spelling errors.

Resumes can be presented individually or to businesses where you are interested in working or, they can be included with completed applications. They could make the difference between you and someone else who is equally qualified. Resumes can also be used when applying to colleges, vocational-technical (voc-tech) schools, Job Corps, group homes, and other places or organizations where you wish to gain admittance.

This work search tool may not be for everyone, especially younger youth who are seeking their first job. However, as you acquire experience, training, and education and have made goals, an updated resume should definitely be included in your portfolio.

Another means of selling yourself to an employer is through a "quick" card. These are three by five (3" X 5") or four by six (4" x 6") file cards containing the same basic information included on a resume. They stress your strong points and can be left with businesses or clipped to an application as a written reminder of your qualifications.

"Quick" cards are not as detailed or complete as a resume, but are simpler to construct. They can be hand-printed which is much easier for someone without access to a computer, printer or typewriter. They also take less time, and do not require special materials. "Quick" cards are less expensive and can be just as effective as a resume, (neat and organized). "Quick" cards can be easily changed for different businesses, objectives and situations.

Resumes and "quick" cards help you prepare for other aspects of the job search. By thinking about and organizing your strengths and qualifications in positive terms, you are actually practicing for applications and interviewing.

Job Directed Resume Instruction Sheet

- Name:** Centered in bold print. Font should not be unusual or distracting. Helvetica, Courier and Geneva print types are commonly used. Use your full first and last name; middle name is optional. Do not use a nickname.
- Address:** Centered one space below name, use regular print and spell everything out. Be sure to center the city, state and zip code below the address. Do not use abbreviations.
- Phone:** Centered below city, state and zip code. List area code first. Provide a daytime number that will be answered by you or someone responsible who will get you the message. Answering machines are acceptable if the message is not inappropriate or silly.

Job Objective:

Be as specific as possible:

Employment as a retail salesperson at Footlocker.

If you are unsure of where you will be applying, or unable to make individual copies, describe your objective in broader terms such as:

Employment as a retail salesperson.

List according to:

Work Related Abilities:

Reflect the work qualities important for most jobs.

List four or five that are most suitable to your abilities and qualifications.

Examples:

- Hard Worker - Work is done to the best of one's ability.
- Enthusiastic - Good attitude, wants to work and does not complain.
- Quick learner - Does not need repeated instruction or training.
- Takes direction well - Does not need repeated instruction or training.
- Good interpersonal skills - Interacts well with others; co-workers and public.
- Reliable - Tasks are completed consistently and independently.
- Dependable - Shows up on time and ready to work.
- Honest - No explanation needed.

Employment Experience:

Description of past work experience including position, duties, responsibilities, and location. Don't forget to include advancements and equipment operated, especially if related to the job.

Tab and highlight.

Education and Goals:

Describe present education status.

Examples: "Completed General Education Development (GED) Certification; High School Diploma; or presently working towards your GED or High School Diploma".

It is important to mention goals, short and long term, that relate to continued learning and training. For instance: Plan to continue skills development in Vocational School, Technical College, Community College, Job Corps or otherwise. Be as specific as possible.

Then describe your main areas of interest.

Example: Interested in environment related careers and construction.

Training:

List any relevant training, permits, certificates, competencies and experience.

Examples are: vocational and pre-vocational classes, training received through state or local government employment, food handlers cards, First Aid and/or CPR instruction, and on the job situations.

Related Experience:

List other experience that's relevant to the job objective and not mentioned previously. This can include any unpaid or volunteer work, hobbies and interests that demonstrate transferable skills are appropriate.

References available upon request:

Can be in-line below other categories (left margin) or centered. Don't mention names specifically but be ready to supply if requested.

Now you have a resume, have someone review it for a critique. It's highly recommended to always getting a second opinion on the resume you produce. This will help ensure you are gaining the desired effect you want the resume to have, the best reflection of what an employer needs to know about you. Don't be afraid to take suggestions and make improvements. Consider your resume a "living document" one that is never finished being written. Keep your resume up-to-date as you gain additional job experience, skills, abilities, and education. You'll be ready for the next job opportunity to compete for.

Give a copy of your resume to each of your references for their feedback, they will also want it to refer to when contacted by an employer.

**Power Words
for
Resumes**

ACCOMPANIED
ACCUMULATED
ACHIEVED
ACQUIRED
ADMINISTERED
ADMITTED
ADVISED
AIDED
ALLOWED
ANALYZED
ANSWERED
APPLIED
APPOINTED
APPRAISED
ARRANGED
ASSEMBLED
ASSESSED
ASSIGNED
ASSISTED
ATTACHED
ATTENDED
AUTHORIZED

BALANCED
BILLED
BOUGHT
BUDGETED
BUILT

CALCULATED
CASHED
CATALOGED
CHANGED
CHARGED
CHARTED
CHECKED
CLASSIFIED
CLEANED
CLEARED
CLOSED
CODED
COLLECTED
COMANDED
COMMUNICATED
COMPILED
COMPLETED
COMPOSED
COMPUTED
CONDUCTED
CONFERRED
CONSTRUCTED

CONSULTED
CONTACTED
CONTRACTED
CONTRASTED
CONTROLLED
CONVERTED
CONVINCED
COORDINATED
COPIED
CORRECTED
CORRESPONDED
COUNSELED
COUNTED
CREATED

DEBATED
DECIDED
DELIVERED
DEMONSTRATED
DEPOSITED
DESCRIBED
DESIGNED
DETAILED
DETERMINED
DEVELOPED
DEvised
DIAGNOSED
DISCOVERED
DISMANTLED
DISPATCHED
DISPENSED
DISPLACED
DIRECTED
DISTRIBUTED
DOCUMENTED
DREW
DROVE

EARNED
EDUCATED
EMPLOYED
ENCOURAGED
ENGINEERED
ENTERTAINED
ESTABLISHED
ESTIMATED
EVALUATED
EXAMINED
EXCHANGED
EXERTED
EXHIBITED
EXPERIENCED
EXPANDED

FABRICATED
FACILITATED

FED
FIGURED
FILED
FILLED
FINANCED
FINISHED
FIRED
FITTED
FIXED
FORMULATED
FOUNDED
GOVERNED
GRADED
GRAPHED
GREETED
HANDLED
HEADED
HELPED
HIRED

IDENTIFIED
IMPLEMENTED
IMPROVED
IMPROVISED
INCREASED
INDEXED
INDICATED
INFORMED
INITIATED
INSPECTED
INSTALLED
INSTRUCTED
INSURED
INTEGRATED
INTERPRETED
INTERVIEWED
INTRODUCED
INVENTORIED
INVESTIGATED
INVOICED
ISSUED
JUDGED
JUSTIFIED
KEPT

LEARNED
LECTURED
LED
LICENSED
LISTENED
LISTED
LOADED
LOCATED
LOGGED
MAILED
MAINTAINED

MANAGED
MANUFACTURED
MARKED
MARKETED
MEASURED
MET
MODIFIED
MONITORED
MOTIVATED

NEGOTIATED
NOMINATED
NOTED
NOTIFIED
NUMBERED

OBSERVED
OBTAINED
OPENED
OPERATED
ORDERED
ORGANIZED
OUTLINED
OVERCAME

PACKAGED
PACKED
PAID
PARTICIPATED
PATROLLED
PERFECTED
PERFORMED
PILOTED
PLACED
PLANED
POSTED
PREPARED
PRESCRIBED
PRESENTED
PRICED
PRINTED
PROCESSED
PRODUCED
PROGRAMMED
PROMOTED
PROMPTED
PROOFREAD
PROPOSED
PROVED
PROVIDED
PUBLISHED
PURCHASED

RAN
RATED
READ

REARRANGED
REBUILT
RECALLED
RECEIVED
RECOMMENDED
RECONCILED
RECORDED
REDUCED
REFERRED
REGISTERED
REGULATED
RELATED
RELAYED
RENEWED
REORGANIZE
REPAIRED
REPLACED
REPORTED
REQUESTED
RESEARCHED
RESERVED
REPOSNSIBLE
RETRIEVED
REVISED
ROUTED

SCHEDULED
SECURED
SELECTED
SENT
SEPARATED
SERVED
SERVICED
SET UP
SHOWED
SOLD
SOLICITED
SORTED
STOCKED
STORED
STRIVE
SUMMARIZED
SUPERVISED
SUPPLIED

TALLIED
TAUGHT
TESTED
TELEPHONED
TRANSFERRED
TRANSPORT
TUTORED
TYPED
VERIFIED

Pre-Resume and Quick Card Outline

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

My Job Objective: _____

Best Work Skills (5 or more): _____

Job Specific Skills: _____

Work Experience (list in order, most recent first, and copy information from master application):

Training, Certificates and Additional Job Related Experiences (see application):

Educational, Vocational and Life Goals:

Special Interests and Hobbies:

List 3 references; (addresses, phone numbers and their relationship to you):

Reference 1; Address: _____
 Phone #: _____
 Relationship: _____

Reference 2; Address: _____
 Phone #: _____
 Relationship: _____

Reference 3; Address: _____
 Phone #: _____
 Relationship: _____

"Quick" Card Instruction Guide

"Quick" cards are similar to resumes but don't require equipment like computers and printers that may not be available to everyone. They can be easily adapted to different job titles (open jobs) and businesses too. When made and used correctly, a "Quick" card quickly communicates a person's abilities, skills and potential to an employer.

The required materials are white or lightly colored 3"X5" or 4"X6" file cards, a black ink pen and the necessary personal information. First complete the resume/quick card outline. This information can also be obtained from a completed master application.

Printing should be neat and easily readable; type is better. Just like an application or resume, there shouldn't be any spelling or grammatical errors.

Name: First, last and middle initial (optional), Phone: (best daytime number)

Objective: Objective should be as specific as possible. Examples: Nursery worker; Carpenter's Helper or Landscaper.

Job Specific Skills: List those skills that relate directly to the above objective. (i.e., familiar with chainsaws, brush cutters, and power-pruners; would be skills that apply to a landscaper's assistant.)

Work Skills or Strengths: These are the universal or transferable skills necessary on all jobs, (i.e. hard worker, enthusiastic, quick learner, takes directions well, good interpersonal skills, responsible, reliable, dependable and honest).

Experience: Highlight any work (paid or unpaid) that shows direct or transferable experience with the objective. See the sample "quick" cards for examples.

Training: Describe training relevant to the Objective, (i.e. completed Culinary Arts Program; State Certified Wastewater Technician; or on-the-job training).

Education: Identify completed status such as "GED certified" or "High School Graduate".

1. Use different headings to fit the objective, and also reflect individual strengths and preferences. The headings can be arranged in any order.
2. "Quick" cards, like resumes, are used to tell an employer what you can do for them. Attach your card to the applications or leave them at businesses where you would like to work. Then call back after a few days to ask if you can fill out an application or better, possibly interview for the "hidden" job that may not be open yet.
3. Remember to always look like you're going to an interview. You will never know if someone makes a judgement based on your appearance, so be prepared.

Sample "Quick" Cards

Name: _____ Daytime Phone Number: _____

Employment Objective: Certified Washington State Wastewater Operator.

Capabilities: Quick learner who pays attention to details. Can take direction and work as a team. Career minded individual with desire to advance in knowledge and experience.

Valid Washington State Drivers License.

Will work any shift, plus weekends and holidays.

Hard worker, good attitude, reliable, responsible, and honest.

Name: _____ Daytime Phone Number: _____

Objective: Employment using skills and abilities.

Work Skills: Enthusiastic, quick learner, take directions well, good interpersonal skills, and responsible.

Experience: Six months as a forestry worker with the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Familiar with power tools and safety practices.

Strengths: Hard worker, good attitude, reliable and honest.

Will work different shifts, weekends, and holidays.

Name: _____ Daytime Phone Number: _____

Vocational Objective: Cook, Prep-Cook, or Related Position,

Experience: Have cooked, prepared and served food in quantity. Interested in food service (cooking) as a career.

Training: Completed pre-vocational Culinary Arts program.

Valid Washington State Food Handlers Permit.

Strengths: Hard worker, good attitude, reliable and honest.

Willing to work nights, weekends, and holidays.

Preparing the Cover Letter

Every resume should be accompanied by a cover letter, which:

- Is a personal correspondence between you and the employer.
- Expresses your knowledge of the company.
- Establishes a connection between your abilities and the employer's needs.
- Introduces your resume and invites the reader to explore it fully.

Cover Letter Guidelines

Keep in mind the following as you write your cover letter:

- Personalize the letter; address it to a specific person by name and job title.
- Briefly explain why you're writing and set the tone from the very beginning.
- Keep it short, to the point, and powerful.
- Highlight your qualifications that are relevant to the job applied for.
- Use simple, direct language, correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. Type neatly and proofread it. Hand sign your signature above your typed name.
- Let your individuality show but avoid being too cute, too humorous, too aggressive or too familiar. Put the best you in the letter.
- Use the same bond paper as your resume.
- Close with your commitment to follow up by asking for an interview or indicating when and how you will be contacting them next.
- Remember: some employers ask for cover letters mainly to assess your writing skills and whether or not you can format a letter.

Cover Letter Outline

Introduction Paragraph – Tell why you are writing i.e., how you heard about the job opening. Name the position or department for which you are applying. Show there is a benefit coming by setting a positive tone. Make it clear that you have done research and that you have something to offer. Write about the employer in this paragraph, not about you.

Body – Your objective in the cover letter is to intrigue the reader. Highlight skills and qualifications that are relevant to the job. State why you would be good for the position and what value you can bring to the employer. Let them know that what you have to offer matters to them. Keep it specific to what you know the employer is looking for and places value in. Be brief, confident and genuine.

Concluding Information – Reiterate your interest in working for the company. Indicate your plan of action for following up. Express your thanks for the time they are taking to review and consider your resume.

Helpful Hint – Remember to include your name, address and best phone number as a heading to the letter. Spell out the employer's name and job title, company name, and address. Don't forget to sign your name above your typed name.

Sample Cover Letter

Your Name
Your Street
Your City, State & Zip Code
Your Best Contact Area Code & Phone Number

Today's date

Hiring Authority's First and Last Name
Hiring Authority's Job Title
Target Company
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear <Name of Hiring Authority>:

In response to your recent position opening advertisement, please accept this letter of interest for the <name of> job currently available. I believe I can meet your needs and contribute to the fine reputation your company has established.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, my education <type of training>, as well as my varied <types of> skills and abilities, make me a strong candidate for this opportunity. I have solid experience in this field and personal commitment to provide quality services to meet your customer's needs.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you at a mutually convenient time. I will call you next Monday to try to schedule a meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name

Enclosure: Personal Resume

Use the skills you have to get the job and succeed in it.

Don't be afraid to use your skills to do the best job. You may not be perfect doing everything at first, but you'll get better with practice, and what's important is to learn and do the job the way your employer wants it done now.

Learn how to learn. You must be willing to learn new skills because your job duties probably will change. Seize every chance to learn new skills. Volunteer to help out on other functions and tasks when you have the opportunity.

Use your interpersonal skills to your advantage. Get along with your supervisor and co-workers. Your supervisor expects you to be dependable and to do your best work and get along with others on the job. Getting to know your co-workers and being able to get along with them will increase your chances of being more successful in the job.

Good communication skills can take you along way. You will be expressing your thoughts, needs and want as you talk with your supervisor and co-workers. The following tips can help you in any conversation:

- Remember people's names. Ask questions to get the conversation moving. Be a good listener.
- Think before you talk. Organize you thoughts using the best words to convey your meaning.
- Speak clearly. Avoid mumbling. Pronounce your words clearly without speaking too fast or too slow, too loudly or too softly.
- Use your best grammar and do not use slang.

Establishing good work habits are essential to holding your new job and becoming part of the team. Here are some tips to have solid work habits:

1. Be on time every day, especially after lunch and breaks. Timeliness displays your dependability. Plan to show up at work a few minutes early each day to allow for anything that may unexpectedly delay you. It's very important to be at work when you are needed.
2. Look the part by wearing clean and appropriate dress for the job. Shine your shoes. Wear conservative fashions, no flashy colors or patterns that clash. Avoid excessive jewelry, make up, and strong colognes or perfumes.
3. Follow all employee rules. Be especially careful to keep all safety rules. Thoroughly know your employers' policies and procedures in the Employee Handbook. There may be some unwritten rules you need to learn as well. Make friends, not enemies to learn more about these.
4. Learn the job inside and out before you make tactful suggestions on how the job could be done better. Keep your eyes and ears open, but your mouth closed, for the first month or two.

5. Show an interest in your work by doing everything to the best of your ability. Try coming up with solutions before asking for help. Build a reputation as a problem solver.
6. Be loyal to your employer. Don't criticize the boss or the company products or services.
7. If you want to advance on the job, figure out a way to make money for the company or improve performance. Take initiative and lend a hand with other workers' assignments and tasks this will show you are a team player.
8. Be genuine by offering a warm friendly greeting, smile and extend a firm handshake to greet you supervisor and co-workers. Mind your manners and avoid office politics and gossip.
9. Go out of your way to provide friendly, helpful service to the customers. The customer pays your wage and building repeat business is how businesses succeed. Be enthusiastic and willing to go the "extra mile" to get the job done.
10. Everyone makes mistakes, especially when you're on a new job. If you make a mistake, admit it and be willing to correct it. It shows that you are honest. Be sure to ask questions if you don't understand instructions, and listen carefully to the answers.
11. Be flexible as a new employee you will be asked to do some tasks that you may dislike. Show your maturity and handle it by doing your best. Sometimes you have to pay dues to prove yourself in a new job and earn better work assignments.
12. Try to never ask for time off of work on short notice unless you have an emergency that nobody else can resolve. Develop a back up plan of alternatives for childcare and transportation. Don't let the necessities become an issue to hold your job.

A Good Worker is:**List Your Examples**

Dependable	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
Efficient	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

A Good Worker:	List Your Examples
Takes Initiative	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Your Employee Handbook lists your employers' policies, procedures, and expectations of their workers.

Most employers hire new workers on a probationary period to begin with. During this period all new employees are evaluated. The things employees are evaluated on are not just how well they can do the work. They also are evaluated on their attitude, attendance and timeliness, how well they get along with other workers, if they follow instructions and policies defined in the Employee Handbook.

The following information is taken directly out of real employer handbooks for new employees from various companies.

Basic Responsibilities and Skills listed in Employee Handbooks:

- Arrive for work on time on those days designated on the schedule.
- Be dressed in clean and proper work attire or uniform.
- Clock in and start work at the time designated on the schedule, and clock out at the end of your shift.
- Check with the Supervisor on duty to find out your job assignment for your shift.
- Present a pleasant, good-natured attitude to every customer you come in contact with-no exceptions. Each customer helps to pay your wages, treat them accordingly.
- Cater to each and every customer as though his order was your first and last chance to impress the public with your superior service and courtesy.
- Serve our customers with quality goods and services.
- Take responsibility to replenish supplies when you use the last item.
- Rotate supplies. Use the "first in, first out" method where older items in supply are used first, and replenished with fresher stock.
- Keep the lot, lobby, restrooms, and your workplace clean and organized. Clean as you go.
- Perform such other duties as your supervisor directs in an efficient and timely manner.

You are a "public relations" representative in any business. These are general skills that everybody should know and perform. It is your responsibility to perform them with maximum effectiveness and results for your employer.

Your Employee Handbook will also list examples of unacceptable behavior. This is only a partial list. Depending on the situation, the employee can be given time to correct the behavior. However, if the problem continues, it will lead to dismissal.

Examples of Unacceptable Behaviors:

- Missing work or arriving late frequently without permission. If you must miss work or arrive late, call your supervisor at least two hours ahead of time to give notice of the circumstance.
- Failing to do your work duties or otherwise intentionally wasting time.
- Using the telephone for excessive personal calls or conducting personal business during work hours. This includes in-coming and out-going calls.
- Violating safety or health rules.

Examples of Gross Misconduct: These are acts that are considered to be gross misconduct, behavior so offensive that the employee can face immediate dismissal.

- Threatening, cussing or abusing any person while on company property.
- Falsifying any record or giving false information to anyone whose duty is to make records.
- Fighting or attempting to hurt another while on company premises or while conducting company business.
- Sexual, racial or any other form of harassment towards any employee or customer.
- Possession of a weapon while on company property or while conducting company business.
- Theft or other dishonest acts while on company property or while conducting company business.
- Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or any other activity on company property involving alcohol, illegal drugs or abuse of prescription drugs.
- Gross insubordination or refusals to follow work instructions from your supervisor.
- False accusations against company or against another employee or customer.
- Any other action equally threatening to the company's best interests.

The Employee Handbook also explains the process for performance, merit raises and promotions. Businesses and companies want to be fair about evaluating your work performance and determining wage increases. Your financial and career progress is based on your productivity, experience, job interest and proven ability coupled with the need and performance of the business. Your job description covers all areas that you are responsible for. Ask your supervisor to spell out their expectations of you. Clear communication is extremely important.

The performance, merit raise and promotion process is designed to hold employees accountable for performance expectations, ensure fair compensation, foster career growth by identifying strengths and areas for improvement, guarantee recognition, and provide an opportunity for discussions with your supervisor and management. Promoting employees from within the company saves businesses time and money. The talents, training, potential, experience and goals of current employees will generally be considered before recruiting and hiring anyone outside of the company.

Why is an Employee Handbook important to the employer? _____

What is the most important information for a new employee to know in the Employee Handbook?

Thinking like an employer, what would you include in your Employee Handbook?

What does it take to get ahead? How do I avoid a relapse to where I started and actually advance?

With consistently sustained attendance, learning new skills and tasks, productivity and performance you will earn advancement in the job you have. Achieving stable employment involves using these skills and behaviors that you may have little or no experience with. However, it is important to remember you have abilities, motivation and strengths you can count on. Make up your mind this is the job you really want and will do what it takes to grow with it, or simply keep looking for that job while working. You'll find it's easier to get a better job while working a job. You are in a situation with more control over your next job offer and can choose one you want.

It will still be challenging and demanding. Use your self-management skills by anticipating your reactions to high stress situations and you are prepared with coping skills for goal achievement, task accomplishment, and strengthened problem solving abilities. Your attitude in the belief you can stay on task will build the expectation of success and not give up too easily and relapse to where you were.

As with anything in life, things change, planning is still the key to stay with, or ahead of those changes that will happen. A complete person balances both the working life and home life they live. You can not develop enough alternatives to predict all the circumstances that may happen, but your investment of attention and time will prepare you to do your best balancing act and not stress out. Your dedication to problem

solving, faced with obstacles and frustrations, is critical to hold on to what you've earned. Don't lose all you've accomplished so far by giving in. Deal with it, and get ahead, deny it and you're sliding back into an un-useful mind set.

Recognizing relapse triggers at home and work

A relapse trigger is any situation that poses a threat to the your sense of control, and/or sense of what is best for yourself. In the real world you have to learn to break down the hassles of normal life into smaller, more manageable problems you can then deal with. This means focus on the little things of the bigger problem, and look at how to work the problem from the bottom to top, and what is the proper sequence that gets the solution of the bigger problem.

For the following situations reply with your actions in the sequence you would do them to successful deal with each:

1. With 30 minutes to get to work you are ready to go and discover your purse or wallet is missing. How do you deal with this?

2. Driving on your way to work your car quits running five miles away. How do you deal with this?

3. It's payday and co-workers invite you out to celebrate your first check. You know that the entire amount is obligated for bills and budget. How do you deal with this?

Your Lifestyle as a Job Hunter

The quicker you learn that you'll be job hunting the rest of your life is a huge leap forward. Congratulations, you are now a part of the modern labor market. As your job hunting lifestyle continues to develop your next job leads, and further career development, consider these trends to make realistic decisions about your future.

- **Lifelong Learning is the way to Lifelong Employability.** Continue your education as far as you can. Re-tooling your mind with the skills that employer's value highly means you can find others jobs easily when you are laid off. Expectation of lifelong employment with one business or company no longer exists. To maintain yourself in stable employment and be self-supporting advancing your education is the key.
- **Diversity in the Workplace is here to stay.** Employers value employees who can work with and accept cultural differences. The modern labor market has more women, older workers, foreign born peoples of different races and ethnic groups than ever before. You must have the attitude to fit in right along side anyone.
- **You may have to join the Temporary Workforce** to get a better job after. It's policy at many companies today to utilize temporary or contract workers as a way to try people out for their jobs. This means you have more flexibility, but limited benefits and no job security.
- **Computers, English, Math, Science and Communication skills** are and will always are in demand by employers. This knowledge and expertise are the tools that generate economic growth and give employers the competitive edge with technically savvy employees.
- **Customer Service** is crucial for businesses and companies to gain and maintain customers in economic tight times. Employees demonstrating positive, helpful attitudes towards customers, supervisors and co-workers are the ones they keep.
- **Be aware of the Economic Conditions** in your local, national, and global labor markets. Literally thousands of jobs are created or destroyed by technological advances, corporate restructuring, and economic down or up turns. Be prepared for it.
- **Stagnate Wage Growth** is the modern trend where employers are willing to replace long-term employees with younger, less expensive workers. This practice has kept wages flat.
- **High Turnover Rates** in employment. You can expect to have many jobs and change careers regularly during your working lifetime. The old fashion career ladder no longer exists. The reality is only you are in control to make decisions about choosing a career path and the training you need to qualify.
- **You are the Free Agent to meet the Employers' Needs.** Accept this relationship with employers where you provide abilities, knowledge, and skills in exchange for wages and benefits as long as both parties are satisfied. The relationship is over when one party wants out or the contract expires.
- **Do what You Love** by focusing on work that is fulfilling and interesting in making career plans. Since job security doesn't exist anymore you might as well do what you like while you can do it.

Interviewing

from the Offender Re-Entry Guide

This section of the Offender Re-Entry Guide is included here by permission from Corrections Clearinghouse, a project of the Washington State Employment Security Department. Corrections Clearinghouse provides training and technical assistance to assist offenders obtain employment and successfully integrate into the community.

For a complete copy of the Offender Re-Entry Guide, please contact:

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“What do I have to offer an employer?”

If you can't answer this question in an interview situation you need more practice until you can. As an ex-offender, the more you understand what an employer wants, the better you will be able to highlight your best skills and abilities. This is the art of selling yourself.

What determines success in an interview?

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • Packaging (your resume, application, dress and appearance) | 45% |
| • Responsiveness (your facial expressions, verbal answers) | 35% |
| • Experience (demonstrating your match to the employers needs) | 10% |
| • Miscellaneous (mood and tone of the interview) | <u>10%</u> |
| You control 90% of the interviews' successful outcome | 100% |

The 3 Principles of Dress Code

1. Dress one step above the position you're seeking
2. People judge by first impressions
3. It's your choice: Look your best and reduce risks.

Objectives:

- Learn what employers expect from an interview.
- Prepare answers to frequently asked questions.
- Practice interviewing skills.

Overview:

- Non-verbal messages
- Interview preparation
- Typical phases of an interview
- Incarceration speech
- Think like an employer and anticipate their concerns, how you will respond.
- Practice interview questions
- Questions you may ask the interviewer
- Thank you notes
- Testing

Non-Verbal Messages

Eye Contact: Looking a person in the eye shows sureness, openness and honesty. Make brief eye contact with the interviewer. Keep your head up. Make occasional eye contact during the interview. Give back roughly the same amount of eye contact the employer gives you.

Voice: Your voice should be clear and loud enough to hear across the room. Practice speaking clearly, say your words carefully and use good grammar (*no* prison slang). Breathing deeply helps you feel and sound more relaxed. Drinking tea with lemon can help clear your throat.

Facial Expression: A slight smile and open eyes make you look smart, alert and friendly. Practice the look in front of the mirror. Use your face to show your best traits.

Posture: Walk tall, sit forward in your chair, hold your head up, keep your back and shoulders straight. Pretend there is a string from the clouds to the top of your head, holding your body in a straight line. Be aware of how you are sitting and standing, without being rigid.

Mannerisms: Be aware of nervous behavior you may fall into. Avoid tapping your fingers, playing with your hair, wriggling your feet, wringing your hands, etc. Use your hands to emphasize what you are saying, but don't be too wild with your gestures. Draw an imaginary box as wide as your shoulders from your neck to your hips. Hand gestures should stay inside the box.

Attitude: Your body language "speaks louder than words", telling the world how you feel. Watch people and think about what attitude you want to convey and practice using body language to give the message. First impressions are made in a few seconds and last forever. When you walk into an interview, the first thing an interviewer sees is how you look. The second is your handshake. Handshaking is a very important part of the interview. A good handshake is firm but not hard. Use your full hand to shake the full hand of the other person, not just your fingertips. The handshake should last about two seconds. Practice counting time-off "one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand" -- let go). If the other person lets go before that, it's OK, to follow their lead. Make eye contact and smile while shaking hands.

Preparing for the Interview**How you look:**

- *Be well groomed, neat and clean.* How you present yourself reflects your pride.
- Clothes: Clean, pressed and fit well; shoes shined and appropriate for the job.
- Dress one level above what you think you will be wearing to work on the job. Avoid short skirts, tops that are low-cut or show the midriff, and excessively high heels.
- Overall: Hair combed; fingernails clean; teeth brushed; freshly showered or bathed. No heavy perfume or makeup; do not smoke before the interview, do not chew gum during the interview; avoid alcohol the night before. Feel sharp, be sharp.

Paperwork to take:

- Resume, certificates and references.
- Letters of recommendation and samples of your work.
- Identification, Social Security card and other proof of citizenship.
- Brochures on Washington State Bonding and WOTC employer tax credit incentive.

Study the Company:

- *Size*: sales, profit, people.
- *Products*: Types of products and clients.
- *Market*: growth--strong/weak, seasonal/non-seasonal.
- *Company*: how it's set up, other parts of the company, parent company.
- *Managers*: who they are and their style as leaders.
- *Fund Base*: public, private, government.
- *Competition*: who else makes the same products.

Review:

- Practice answering interview questions.
- Know what the company is looking for.
- Know what you want to say about yourself.
- Practice shaking hands, making eye contact, and smiling.
- Know your interests, skills and abilities.
- Check directions and parking beforehand, if possible.

On Your Way:

- Be early, go alone.
- Eat a breath mint ahead of time.
- Be able to pronounce the name of the person who you are meeting.
- Relax: *Breathe deeply; know you're prepared; and that you have good skills and abilities to offer or you wouldn't have been invited to the interview.*

Once there:

- Shake hands; greet the interviewer in a friendly manner.
- Pay attention and establish eye contact.
- Smile and be polite to everyone during the interview.

Typical Phases of an Interview

Many (but not all) interviews have natural stages they go by. Knowing these stages can help you be comfortable and ready as each step comes up.

Introductory stage:

- A brief hello and handshake.
- An attempt to help you feel at ease.
- Interviewer gives some general history and explains the job.
- A shared "first impression" happens.
- The interviewer has the lead.

Inquiry stage (the longest):

- Interviewer still has the lead.
- The questions asked are to find out who you are and what you are looking for.
- The interviewer is looking for what you can do for the company.
- Keep replies positive, short and right to the point.
- Refer to your past job successes, personal abilities and give examples.
- Watch for clues that reveal problems you can help solve.

Marketing stage:

- Applicant takes the lead - (you have about *one minute*).
- Show how your abilities and past work can help the company if you get the job.
- Deliver your incarceration speech.
- Explain what you can do for the company if you get the job.
- Show interest in the job - why you would like to work for this company.
- Ask the questions you have planned ahead of time.

Closure:

- Ask how they are going to choose the person that they will be hiring.
- Discuss the salary range of the job (*if it is brought up*).
- Plan your follow-up (arrange to call at a certain time, day, etc.).
- Let them know again - briefly and strongly, why you want the job.
- Thank them for the time and courtesy.
- Be aware of the time (don't stretch it out) and leave politely.

It's recommended you ***disclose your incarceration during the marketing stage*** of the interview by repeating your:

Incarceration Speech

- There is something that you have the right to know:
- In (year) _____, I made a mistake and was convicted of _____.
- At the time my judgement was clouded by _____
- ...But I am putting that behind me now!
- I admit that this was a serious error in my judgement and **I want to assure you that I have changed.**

Key Words saying how: _____

- I worked while I was in prison as a _____ and learned how to:

Key Words: _____

- There are some advantages you are eligible for if you decide to hire me.
 1. I can be bonded up to \$10,000.
 2. As an employer, you are eligible for a Work Opportunities Tax Credit (WOTC). You would be eligible to receive up to a \$2,400 federal credit for the first \$6,000 in wages you pay me.
- I am aware that my past actions may cause you to question my judgement , but, **I am prepared to do whatever it takes to prove myself to be a reliable and capable employee.**

Key Words saying how: _____

The trick to answering this question is to: **Tell the truth!**

1. Accept responsibility for what you did: "I can't blame anyone other than myself for what I did."
2. Briefly identify one reason for your action: "I do know that the people I spent most of my time with influenced me a lot and I did what they all did...just to hang around them."
3. Limit the amount of detail that you give: "I know; it sounds simple, but there is not much more to it than that."

What can an employer ask about my doing time?

Almost everyone has some interest in knowing about the "other side" of life. The same may be true of interviewers. They're interested in an "inside look" at jail life. It makes great stories when they are talking to other people.

1. Indicate lack of fun: "I'm sure you understand that jail is not a place where most people want to be."
2. Simply state what a "working day" in jail is like. "I had to wake up at 5:30 each morning, if I wanted to eat. Then I prepared for work. After that, it was pretty much like any other job. I had to meet the production quotas, do good work and follow the directions of the supervisors...or else I didn't get paid or wasn't allowed to stay on the job."
3. Relate jail work to competitive work: In fact, a workday in jail/prison is not too different than a workday on the outside.

Prospective employers can inquire about arrests; whether charges are still pending, have been dismissed, or led to conviction of a crime involving behavior which would adversely affect job performance. Inquires concerning convictions or imprisonment will be considered to be justified by business necessity if the crimes inquired about relate reasonably to the job duties, and such convictions (or release from prison) occurred within the last ten (10) years.

CAUTION: Don't let the employer drag you into talking in detail or at length about what goes on in an institution. That is not the purpose of your interview session.

- **Keep your answers simple and clear (vague answers sound like you're hiding things)...**
- **Keep your answers brief...**
- **Keep your dignity.**

What Did You Gain While Incarcerated?	What Did You Lose While Incarcerated?
a) Improved education, which will help you in your job	a) Access to and respect from your kids
b) A healthy respect for authority and rules	b) Trust from your family and friends
c) A genuine respect for other people's rights	c) Contact with your community
d) A better understanding of why you do things	d) Accomplishing personal goals
e) Increased ability to get along in pressure situations	e) Personal property (car, home, etc...)
f) Much more patience in handling problems, troubleshooting	f) Self esteem
g) Job related skills training	g) Money you could have earned working
h) Counseling that helped you change your behavior	h) Opportunity to enter certain types of careers
i) A desire to do what's right so you don't return	i) Ability to travel any where you want
j) Improved self-discipline	j) Right to enter the job market on your own terms
k) Renewed respect for the value of hard work	k) Sense of accomplishment

You May Have to Go Out on a Limb to Get the Job You Want, Be Honest.

1. **Indicate only the last conviction:** I committed a property offense...
2. **State the mistake and accept responsibility:** It was a mistake, but I did it and...
3. **Indicate sorrow for victims of crime:** I have been sorry for what I did to the victim(s) ever since...

4. **State that you learned something:** By committing the crime I lost my spouse and children, the trust of my family, my car, my home and much of my self-respect.
5. **State that you have learned something:** If there can be anything good to come from my crime, I would have to say that I did learn a lot about myself.
6. **Indicate what you learned:** I gained more respect for other people's rights. I learned how to follow directions and developed more self-control than I ever had before.
7. **Focus on the most important thing you learned:** The most important thing that I learned is that you have to work for what you want.
8. **State what you did to make the best of the situation:** While incarcerated, I took classes in carpentry, electricity, plumbing, dry walling and masonry so that I would have marketable skills upon my release.
9. **Relate your incarceration experience to work:** In fact, I was even promoted to foreman of the crew that did most of the in-house maintenance work.
10. **Indicate your need to earn your way back into the community:** I know that I am going to have to earn my way back into society and I am willing to do whatever I need to do that.
11. **Indicate your willingness to talk about things:** Don't hesitate asking me questions about my incarceration or why I did what I did. Even though it embarrasses me, you deserve to know as much about me as you want to know.

How do I know you'll go straight, or that the police won't be at my door?

There are never any guarantees when a person hires "anyone." This might be considered a loaded question and you have to handle this one with "class."

1. Indicate that you understand the employer's concern, "I can understand that you might be worried about this, I would be."
2. Compare yourself to other workers. "Aside from my having made a serious mistake, I am not much different than your other workers."
3. Point out that there are no guarantees in life. "I'm sure that when you hired some of your employees you thought that they might not work out... but they did, and that some of those you thought would work out, did not."
4. Indicate reasons for doing well on the job. "I do know that if I make an error or a mistake on the job, I pay a much higher price than anyone else."

5. Indicate that you are eligible for Bonding and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (W.O.T.C.).
6. Tell them that talk won't prove it, though you've been open and honest. Then say: "Give me a chance, give me the job and I'll prove it to you in my work!"

What will the other workers think?

In preparing for this situation, there are three different tactics that you might use: confidentiality, hard work breeds acceptance, and a learning experience approach.

Confidentiality

One tactic is to try to keep the information hidden except from those who need to know, for as long as you can. The problem with this approach is that you'll probably have to isolate yourself from the rest of the workers. This might not do you much good and the other workers might see you as "stand-off-ish" or "stuck-up." The boss might also hire someone who knows the scoop on you.

To use this approach, you have to:

- 1. Request confidentiality:** "I would like to request that only the people who need to know, have information regarding my criminal history."
- 2. Gets the interviewer to commit to your request:** "Do You?"
- 3. Shows separation of job and social life:** "I plan on keeping the work I do and my social life completely apart."
- 4. Negotiate idea of a problem:** "I don't think that a problem should ever arise."
- 5. Show preparation in case it does come up:** " But I figure that if I do a good job, put in more than my fair share of effort, and help others, keep my mouth shut, and ears open, I'll be accepted by the other workers, even if they do find out."

Hard Work Breeds Acceptance

Another tactic is to assume that sooner or later someone is going to find out that you are an ex-felon. It is important that you try to do good work and develop good working relationships. Even though we can't determine how each co-worker and supervisor will initially react, we do know that if you do good work and get along with your co-workers, you will be accepted...sooner or later.

1. **Indicate that you understand the problem:** "I understand why you think this might be a problem."
2. **State knowledge of need of time:** "I know that it will take time to build trust and friendship."
3. **Stress relationship between good:** "I'm also convinced that doing good work and helping people in their jobs is one of the best ways to get people to like you, even if you made a mistake."
4. **Stress productivity:** "One thing you will get from me is a person who is trying to do their best and I am motivated to give my best, just to be accepted."

Learning Experience

A third tactic is to use the approach that your being hired will turn into a learning experience for all involved. We already know that people like to find out about "the other side of life" so we try to use that as a way to answer the question about what the other workers will think.

1. **Indicate you understand the problem:** "I can understand your worry about how other people will accept me and I'd worry about it too."
2. **Turn into a learning experience:** "But, also consider this an opportunity for everyone to learn..."
3. **Indicate what they'll learn:** "About the negative results" of crime and the price you have to pay for being on the other side of the law."
4. **Show what you'll learn:** "On the other hand, I know that I'll be able to learn about the company and job from them."
5. **Give question back to the interviewer:** "Doesn't this seem like a good opportunity for all considered?"

Other Problem Areas

Gaps in employment history: This answer depends on your individual circumstances. What it was that caused you to be unemployed. For example, "I was self-employed during that time" or "it took some time for me to recover from my injury, but I'm fine now and ready to go to work," or "I had a number of part-time jobs during that time-mostly seasonal, which I didn't bother to put down." See sections on emotional illness or jail/prison record for examples of possible responses for those reasons.

For women, there are a number of good explanations involving such things as "I was needed by my parents." If married, "I was raising my family," or "I was helping care for my grandmother," "I was babysitting," "I was doing housework for a relative."

Everyone who has been unemployed has been engaged in something. Put the best construction into your interview. If you have been traveling around and enjoying life, it is best to admit it, perhaps with a statement such as "I am ready to settle down to a good job."

The idea is to tell the truth, but to pick the most acceptable reason out of the several possibilities that the applicant may have, and use that one. The impression to give is that the individual was occupied with some meaningful activity even though he/she was not gainfully employed.

No recent work history: See the ideas listed above. It is important to convey that you are definitely eager to go to work **NOW!** Avoid the impression that you have been looking for work for a number of months, but no one would hire you. (No employer wants to hire someone all others have rejected!)

Have never worked: If you've just left school, this is not a big problem. Other examples: "taking a correspondence course," "working for neighbors," "helping on the family farm or business..." anything that suggests constructive activity.

The individual is telling the employer that he may not be able to learn academic things quickly, but that his performance will be consistent once he knows what to do.

The individual might also be able to say, "Because it does take me a little longer than most people to learn new things, I am satisfied with work that does not have a lot of variety." (a routine job). The individual tells the employer that he has recognized the speech problem, that he/she has had therapy, and does try to compensate for it by speaking more slowly. The employer is likely to understand that the individual would be nervous in an interview, and speech problems would be aggravated.

Younger than most on the job for which you are applying: "I know that I am only ____ years old, but I can learn a job quickly, and I'm interested in getting a steady job that I can keep for several years. This presents youth as an asset in being able to learn a job quickly. Anticipates employer's reaction (that he/she expects a young person will not stay on the job long), and counters this by saying that he/she is looking for a job that he/she will be able to keep for a long time.

Think Like the Employer

You can tell the employer over and over that you are the best person for the job, but the easiest and most believable way to show that you are is to prove it by giving examples. This exercise will help you get ready to answer the questions interviewers use most often to find out if you own these traits.

Look at the qualities listed below. Write down a few key words to remind you of when you have shown that quality in your past. Write enough to trigger your memory so that you can discuss it, if you need to.

1. **Willingness to take responsibility:** What things have you done to show what you can do and take initiative?

Key Words: _____

2. **Ability to handle conflict:** What have you done to resolve problems with others? How did you act in the middle of a conflict?

Key Words: _____

3. **Ability to speak clearly:** Are you able to group your thoughts and explain them? Are you brief and to the point? Are you a good listener? How have you shown this?

Key Words: _____

4. **Ability to bend - give a little:** Have there been new situations you've adapted to? How do you deal with stress?

Key Words: _____

5. **Problem Solving:** How you found good solutions to a problem? Have you learned your job duties quickly?

Key Words: _____

6. **People Skills:** When working with others as a team, have you worked as a follower, leader or both? How strong are you at dealing with others?

Key Words: _____

7. **Self-confidence:** You have strengths and abilities. What are your strengths and abilities? Can you tell someone what you are able to do?

Key Words: _____

8. **Job Skills:** Do you accept new ways of doing things easily? Have you kept all the skills needed to do your job?

Key Words: _____

9. **Willingness to accept new ideas:** In what ways have you shown your good will?

Key Words: _____

10. **Energy level:** Are you ready to work hard to reach your job goals?

Key Words: _____

Give Proof by Example

Nearly all interview questions need answers that show what you bring to the worksite. Some of the most often asked questions could be answered by sharing an example of how you handled a situation in the past job. Then link it to what you can do, or what you have to offer this employer. These types of answers generally begin with the words, "*I can...*", and "*Here's how I did...*" There are five simple parts that give body to your answer:

1. *Cite your specific example:*

"I have **handled conflict** in the past by..."

2. *Give details that would tell who, what, where, when and how:*

"...**Two of my staff** were both tasked with **putting in a new program**. They reached a point of **real conflict** over how one of the steps should be done and were not able to work it out. I helped settle the problem by **drawing a flow chart that helped with their plan**."

3. *Give numbers whenever possible to support your statement:*

"The **process** took approximately **30 minutes**."

4. *Show the positive results of your action:*

"The short time it took to walk through my **method** let those staff reach a **useful end on their own**. They were able to **keep going with their project, and used the method that I showed them** to work through their trouble spots. They **started the program a full week earlier** than planned because they had **learned a new way to arrange the plan**."

5. *Show the employer the link between your example and how it applies to this position:*

"I know this position **needs a strong leader that is able to answer to** a bright, and capable team. I was able to **quickly settle conflicts while still teaching and guiding my staff.**"

On the next few pages are questions employers often ask, along with ideas and tips on how to answer. Since these questions are spoken, not written, it helps to make up key words for your answer. The key word notes in the examples have been bolded. Using your notes, practice your answers with a partner. *Review the interview questions on the following pages. Write your keyword answers in the space provided in each page.*

Employer's Expectations during the interview.

Everyone has certain expectations that they would like to have met. The same holds true for the employer. The employer is looking for (expecting) certain behaviors and responses during the interview process. It's on these expectations (the things he/she is looking for) that your interview will be judged.

Appearance:

- Do you look like you belong in the job?
- Is your appearance neat and clean?
- **Is the paper work you present (applications, resumes, work samples, etc.) neat and attractive?**

Attendance and Punctuality:

- Are you on time daily and stay for the full day?
- Are you back from breaks on time?
- Dependable and reliable?
- Will you do the work appropriately?
- Are you a trustworthy employee?
- Can you admit mistakes and accept criticism and instruction?
- Can the employer depend on you to help him in tight spots (like overtime)?
- Are you a regular attending employee?
- Are you willing to make some sacrifices for improved business performance?

Skills:

These are the things that you can do immediately to help the employer meet the needs of his business.

Abilities:

These are transferable skills. If you can type you can probably learn to work other machines that require manual dexterity. These are things that you can learn to do without much training time.

The Mechanics of job interviewing

1. The interview begins when you walk in the door.
2. Be there at least ten minutes early to compose your thoughts.
3. If the interview conflicts with something you must do that is really more important, it is perfectly okay to suggest another time.
4. Best time for interviews? Many people have suggested between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday are the best times and days.
5. First impressions are important, and more important when you are meeting a stranger.
6. The employer wants to talk to YOU. Do not take anyone with you to the interview (i.e., friends, boyfriend, girlfriend, children, and relatives).
7. Greet the interviewer by name (be certain you know it). Greet him/her with confidence. Look them in the eye and shake hands firmly.
8. Being nervous is okay. Take a few deep breaths. It often helps to be honest about it-even admitting it-to the interviewer. You will be surprised how quickly one's nervousness disappears once you have brought it up.
9. Watch your posture. Don't slouch, yawn, fidget, or display nervousness in any other way. Be aware of how you are sitting and what your hands are doing.
10. Actively listen. This serves at least two purposes: (1) it draws attention away from yourself and your nervousness, and (2) you will better be able to pick up clues from the interviewer on the things she/he says about the kind of person to be hired. You can use this information to describe yourself as that person.
11. Show proper respect for the interviewer. (If she/he introduces himself or herself as Mr. Jones or Ms. Jones, they are asking you to do the same. If they call themselves by their first name, such as Mike or Nancy, the same is true). Do not refer to them as "Mac", "Honey", or "Buddy".
12. Wait to be invited to sit down. If you are carrying a folder or briefcase with you, do not set it on the interviewer's desk. Set it next to your chair. Also, wait for the interviewer to begin the conversation. She/he may need time to organize your application and/or resume and remember who you are.
13. Answer all the employer's questions accurately, honestly, frankly, and promptly. Do not brag. However, you should use "I" in your responses. Use correct English and appropriate language. Speak distinctly, but keep your answers brief.
14. Do not rush your answers. Never interrupt the interviewer! Let them finish what they want to say. If you are interrupted, wait, and then return to the original point to finish what you want to say.
15. Avoid an argument with your prospective employer. If you disagree, drop it. This is not the time nor place to argue.
16. Avoid mention of your personal problems. The interviewer is interested in your ability, not your troubles. If you discuss problems and show you are desperate, it may sound as if you are begging for a job.

17. Be positive in all your answers. Even a negative experience can have a positive comment. You can turn a negative experience into an asset, and admit it by explaining how you have changed your ways.
18. Be able to verbally give a continuous record of all your jobs, dates of employment, supervisors' names, the exact nature of your work, and the reason why you left a job. This information, and how you give it, is very important.
19. When asked, be able to point out the value derived from training, work experience, unpaid work, hobbies and life experiences as they apply to the position you are seeking. Try not to discuss unrelated things.
20. Be able to give the name, address and position of three people (not related) that know you well as references for the job. Always ask a person if you may use them as a reference before you use their names. It is a good idea to have a copy of this information with you to give to the interviewer if she/he asks for it.
21. Be prepared to ask questions and to answer questions. It is perfectly okay to write out a list of questions to ask your prospective employer.
22. The interviewer will usually close the conversation. Be certain you have said and asked everything you wanted to before she/he begins the closing of the interview. The interviewer may say, "I will be interviewing the remainder of the week and I will call you then"; or, "Thanks for coming in. I'll let you know by phone or letter about my decision next week". Many of us simply say thank you and leave. **DON'T!!!** Use this standard "call back closing" for yourself. "I have some other interviews coming up and I may not be home if you call. May I call you back next Friday?" This is to insure that she/he doesn't forget about you and will be expecting your call to inquire about the decision.

Answer suggestions for "tough questions" asked in interviews

Why do interviewers throw in these unnerving questions? The questions are designed to show how fast you think, how well you handle pressure, and how concise and articulate you are. They are important, and if you are job searching, you'd be wise to arm yourself with impressive replies.

1. "What can I do for you today?"

Employers do not really want a straight answer to this question. They already know that you are applying for their job. Suggested responses should therefore tell the employer what the applicant could do for him/her.

- "Well, actually I'm here to offer you something, and that's loyal and efficient work as an office clerk."
- "I'm here to talk about your need for an experienced driver, and the experience and skills I have to offer."

2. "Tell me about yourself!"

This request is the opportunity to tell them about your skills. They are not interested in hearing a lot of details about your childhood days or personal life. Go straight to discussion of the particular job at hand!

3. "What kind of work are you looking for?"

Be as specific as you can with this particular employer. If you are applying for a specific job, say so. If not, you may want to say something like - "I, of course, want a job in which I will be able to produce for the company and grow along with it."

4. "Do you know anything about our company?"

Hopefully, you will have done some homework and will know something about the company. But if you don't, you should be prepared to say something other than "no", and indicate an interest in knowing more.

5. "Why did your last job end?"

It is not recommended that you lie. But, you don't necessarily need to tell the whole ugly truth if the whole story will turn the new employer off.

- "I felt that my career potential was limited with that company, so I left to seek work with more advancement opportunities."
- "I've relocated to this area."

6. "What did you like least about your previous job?"

Wants an honest answer. Reply in a positive manner. Never say anything negative.

7. "What did you like most about your previous job?"

Be specific. "I love organizing things" is vague, ineffective. Far better is "I enjoyed reorganizing the company's filing system - and my new plan resulted in fewer misplaced papers and greater speed in finding information."

8. "What would you say is your weakest point?"

Never admit to a real "weakest point", after all you are selling a product and that product is you. Instead, give the employer a strength, but call it a weakness.

- "Well, my friends consider me to be a real stickler on punctuality. Even with casual social appointments, I always insist on being there on time."
- "I suppose I'm somewhat of a perfectionist. Even when I've completed a large volume of work, I get upset with myself when something turns out not to be totally up to my standards."

9. "What are your greatest strengths?"

Accept this invitation to sell yourself by citing specific assets you know the employer desires. Interviewers like to hear abstract qualities-loyalty, willingness to work hard, politeness, and promptness-expressed in concrete terms. If you're good at putting people at ease, say so then illustrate by adding for example,

- "Last year, my supervisor asked me to be the resource person for all new employees in our division because he said, 'So many of them had commented on my eagerness to help.'"

10. "What do you hope to be doing five or ten years from now?"

Indicate ambition and confidence in your abilities, but be careful not to appear to be threatening the employer's own job.

- "I would hope to still be employed here in an advanced position which would take advantage of my knowledge, abilities and experience."

11. "Are you looking for permanent or temporary work?"

Answer this one to reflect what the employer is looking for. Remember that no matter what your plans may be, you cannot tell the future. Therefore, be careful not to unnecessarily eliminate yourself from consideration because of personal plans.

12. "What do you expect as a starting salary?"

Never mention a salary figure before the employer's range is known. To do so is to either overprice or under-price yourself. Once the employer mentions a figure, you agree with it. Negotiations, if there are to be any, should be attempted a couple of days later.

- "I would be willing to consider whatever your firm usually pays new people in this position."
- "I would be willing to accept whatever your company policy states."

13. "What was your last salary in your previous position?"

Try to convey that your previous salary has nothing to do with how you can perform in the assignment for the prospective employer.

14. "How much do you expect to be making five years from now?"

You never know what the value of money is going to be five years from now. Don't give a dollar figure. Talk in terms, perhaps, of being more interested in the satisfaction to be derived from the work to be done and the financial rewards will follow.

15. "Why do you want to work for us?"

Compliment the company. Tell them what you can offer.

16. "Why do you want this job?"

Compliment the company. Tell them what you can offer. Never, never, never,..."I need a job."

17. "Don't you feel you are a little too old/young for this job?"

Rely on a past experience to support a "no" answer to this question. If too young, talk about energetic, enthusiasm, etc.

18. "With your background, we believe that you are over-qualified for this position."

This is the time to really sell yourself. Show that your so-called over-qualification can be a plus for the new employer.

19. "Any objections to a psychological interview and tests?"

Answer should be, "No, I don't mind. Hope it's job related."

20. "What is your philosophy of life?"

A "reaction type" question – interviewer is often "testing" for reaction. Turn question to your advantage. Answer somewhat job related. Keep it short.

21. "Will your former employer(s) give you a good reference?"

You may get around the bad reference by suggesting to the new employer who to call. Or, be honest. If the reference is negative, briefly explain.

22. "How did you get along with your former boss and co-workers?"

Never, never, never "bad mouth" a former employer or the people with whom you worked.

- "Great bunch of people. We all got along just fine."
- "Well, I certainly have no complaints and I'm sure they don't have any either."

23. "How long did it take you to get here today?"

This is a disguised question. In response to any question or comment regarding your address or transportation, volunteer enough information so that the employer will be satisfied that getting to work on time is no problem.

24. "I've interviewed several people with more experience than you. Why should I hire you instead of them?"

You don't know the other people so do not comment on them. Refer to the job candidate you do know (YOU), and find some indication of what the employer stands to gain by hiring you.

- "I can't speak for the others, but I can for myself. I can assure you that I always learn new assignments very rapidly", and "I'm sure it would be very hard for you to find someone who could beat my eagerness and capacity for work."

25. “What do you do in your spare time?”

Workaholics aren’t always the best employees, so this question is asked in hopes of hiring well-rounded individuals. Sam Adams, a senior personnel consultant for ASOSA Personnel explains, “In a sales job, for instance, ice is broken by sharing small talk on common interests or hobbies. That’s very difficult if the salesperson’s only interest is work.”

- Wayne E. Calhoun, president of Professional Placement, Inc., adds, “Your answer gives you dimension. For example, if you like to play bridge, the interviewer might surmise that you enjoy other analytical activities.”
- Highlight pastimes that would be an asset to the job you seek or that you may have in common with the employer. (If the employer has a picture of his/her family, you might say, “I enjoy spending time with my family.”)

26. “Are you applying for any other jobs?”

This is not a trick question! In today’s tight job market, no one expects you to apply to only one company.

27. Silence!

You’ve finished your answer and are awaiting the next question. Silence! Suddenly, you feel uncomfortable. To fill the void, you begin babbling an unprepared spiel.

- Though it may seem difficult, you simply smile and remain silent. Interviewers often use silence to see if you can handle stress and still maintain poise.

28. Personal questions.

A lot of people who’ve been through the interviewing process report facing personal questions that don’t apply to the job and may be illegal to ask. How will you handle these?

You could tell the interviewer that the question is illegal or off-limits. But, this will likely antagonize them and leave you without a job offer. If you refuse to answer, you may never get that chance. The only exception is when you’re certain the answer will sour the interviewer’s impression of you. Don’t be afraid to say, “I’ve never been asked a question like that before. May I think about it for a minute?” The interviewer will respect your honesty and your habit of thinking before you speak.

Practice interview questions

Your qualifications, sample questions:

- "Can you tell me something about yourself?"
- "How are you qualified for this job?"
- "Why do you think we should hire you for the job?"
- "How does your work history relate to the job?"

Things to keep in mind when writing your key word answer:

1. At what point of the interview would this question be asked?
2. What skills is the employer looking for in your answer?
3. What employer need can you fit your answer to?
4. Can you answer by giving examples of what you have done as proof of your skills?
5. Tell me what you can do for the company based on your past jobs or schooling.
6. Cover three to five subjects; be clear and brief, bringing out your skills and knowledge.

Sample answer to "Can you tell me something about yourself?"

"I have **two years experience** working as a **cashier** in a small market. **I operated a computerized cash register, helped customers and stocked shelves.** I also **posted payments received** on private gas accounts. **I like working with the public** and take pride in the fact that I am always **friendly and polite** even when the market is very busy. My **cash receipts and postings always balanced.** The owners knew I was very **reliable** and I was often given **extra work** such as **making bank deposits** and **keeping cash drawer balance sheets.** I know that your store insists on meeting customer needs. **I listen well**, so I usually **know what customers are looking for** and **I enjoy solving problems.**"

Select one of the questions above and write a key word response. Pick the question you think would you be LEAST comfortable for you in an interview.

Your Accomplishments, sample questions:

- "What do you consider your greatest successes?"
- "Tell me two or three things that you have done well."
- "What are your greatest strengths?"
- "Describe a problem that you faced and how you solved it."
- "What are your weaknesses?"
- "What are the areas where you need to grow?"
- "Give me an example of a success that made you very happy, and why."

Things to keep in mind when writing your key word answer:

1. At what point of the interview would this question be asked?
2. What skills is the employer looking for in your answer?
3. What employer need can you fit your answer to?
4. What can you do for the employer? Answer by giving examples as proof of your skills.
5. If asked about "weakness" show how you've grown as a result of finding and fixing the issue.
6. Show personal responsibility.
7. When bringing out strengths, select at least three, all needed in the new job.

Sample answer: **"Give an example of a success that made you very happy"**

I am good at **seeing what needs to be done** and working out a way to make it happen. For example, **when I worked at a family restaurant**, I saw that it sometimes took a couple of hours to get the **replacement workers in when someone called in sick**. I suggested the **roster be posted** and that **workers sign in the times that were best for them to be called as a replacement**. This really **lowered the time-spent calling, 75% of the time a replacement worker was already in place when the shift started**. I know **your restaurant values** quick and efficient service for diners. That new roster made a big difference. Our **customers did not have to wait for service** due to our being short-staffed."

Select one of the questions above and write a key word response. Pick the question you think would you be LEAST comfortable with in an interview.

Your Career Goals, sample questions:

- "Where do you see yourself in five years from now?"
- "What are your short term and long range plans?"
- "Why do you want to work for this company?"

Things to keep in mind when writing your key word response:

1. At what point in the interview would this question be asked?
2. What skills is the employer looking for in your answer?
3. What employer need can you fit your answer to?
4. What can you do for the employer? Give examples of what you have done as proof of your skills.
5. What have you learned in your study of the company that you really like?
6. Describe your goals as they fit the skills and duties of the job.
7. Show your ability to give to/work for the goals of the company.

Sample answer to, "Why do you want to work for this company?"

When I made up my mind to go into real estate sales, **I studied different companies** and their ways of going after home and business sales. I **talked to people who worked here and read reviews**. One thing I really like about your **firm is its integrity**. Your strength has been in **client gain, fairness and honesty**. You have been able to get high profits and not lower your standards. **My values are similar** to yours. I have **strong speaking skills**. As an **active listener**, I am able to find out a client's overall goal with a sale or purchase. Because of that **I know about the local market and working to meet my customers' needs**, I have **closed 50 deals** during the past year. I take pride in being a **top producer** and **upholding my steady integrity**."

Select one of the questions above and write a key word response. Pick the question you think would you be LEAST comfortable with in an interview.

Your people skills, attitude and personality, sample questions:

- "Do you prefer to work alone or with others?"
- "How would others describe you?"
- "Tell me about your past employers".
- "How well do you learn or take correction?"
- "What work did you do working as part of a team?"

Things to keep in mind when writing your keyword response:

1. At what point of the interview would this question be asked?
2. What skills is the employer looking for in your answer?
3. What employer need can you fit your answer to?
4. What can you do for the employer?
5. *(Give examples of what you have done as proof of your skills.)*
6. Focus on your abilities to get along with others.
7. Even if the work is a one-person job, the employer still wants to know if you can work on a team.

Sample answer to, "Do you prefer to work alone or with others?"

"I have the ability to work **both alone and as part of a team**. I think well, **stay on track by myself, and learn quickly**. My personal goals on the job are to **do the work well, and just the way it is needed**. I know that work on a production line **needs special skills, but I also have the ability to speak well** with others on the line. This keeps the flow of work up to the top level. **I also like working as part of a team**.

Last year, XYZ Co. began a **program of team growth**. The unit **I worked in worked together to set up a new system** that helped us **lower production time for the spindle widget**. The lesser time allowed a 10% increase in the number of spindle widgets being made. I learned from that experience, that **I am very helpful in a team because I can help put others' ideas into action**."

Select one of the questions above and write a key word response. Pick the question you think would you be LEAST comfortable with in an interview.

Money and benefits, sample questions:

- "What kind of salary are you expecting?"
- "How much did you make on your last job?"
- "We usually pay new employees between \$8 and \$12 per hour. Does this work for you?"

Things to keep in mind when writing your keyword response:

1. At what point of the interview would this question be asked?
2. What skills is the employer looking for in your answer?
3. What employer need can you fit your answer to?
4. What can you do for the employer? (Give examples of what you have done as proof of your skills.)
5. Have you checked to find out the usual pay in the area for this type of work?
6. Do not state a money amount until they have actually offered you the job.

Sample answer to, "We usually pay new employees between \$8 and \$12 per hour. Does this work for you?"

"I am interested in the salary, of course, but **want to work for your company** for several reasons. Your company has been one of the **most solid in the field** for the last five years and has **regularly upgraded staff technical skills** and I like that. Based on **what I know about the job and this kind of work**, I was looking at a range of \$9.50 to \$13.00 per hour. It seems like our **ranges are pretty close**. I'm sure we'll be able to **reach a fair agreement**."

Select one of the questions above and write a key word response. Pick the question you think would you be LEAST comfortable with in an interview.

Your reasons for leaving and attitudes about your last job, sample questions:

- "Why did you leave your last job?"
- "Why have you been unemployed for so long?"
- "Why did you decide to change jobs?"
- "How did you get along with your last supervisor?"
- "What did you like most/least about your last job?"

Things to keep in mind when writing your keyword response:

1. At what point of the interview would this question be asked?
2. What skills is the employer looking for in your answer?
3. What employer need can you fit your answer to?
4. What can you do for the employer?
5. (Give examples of what you have done as proof of your skills.)
6. Give a positive light to your reason for leaving and the people you worked for.
7. If you were fired or left due to a bad situation, take responsibility for your own actions.
8. Let them know that you learned something from a bad situation.
9. Keep these answers simple, direct and honest.

Sample answer to. "Why did you leave your last job?"

"I'll be honest with you, **I was let go** from my last job for too many absences. I let a **personal problem take control of my work duties** and missed some days when I really should have been there. It caused **a lot of extra work for my coworkers**. I've called my supervisor since then and told him **how sorry I was for the mistake**. Going through that **taught me better ways on how to manage my personal life so that it will not hurt my work.**"

Select one of the questions above and write a key word response. Pick the question you think would you be LEAST comfortable with in an interview.

Behavior based questions of concern, sample questions:

More and more questions are being asked about how you would act in a given situation. It is the employer's way to test how you will answer to their common or unusual work events. It can fall under any of the question ranges already used, or it can be something that refers to a special field of work.

- "How would you handle...?"
- "What would you do if...?"

Things to keep in mind when writing your keyword response:

1. At what point of the interview would this question be asked?
 2. What skills is the employer looking for in your answer?
 3. What employer need can you fit your answer to?
 4. What can you do for the employer?
 5. *(Give examples of what you have done as proof of your skills.)*
 6. When you can, talk about like situations in your past. *(Give proof by example)*
 7. If you have never gone through a same type of situation, take a moment to think out what traits the employer is looking for, or hidden concerns he/she may have.
- Always remember to add your skills and how you would use them.

Example answers to: "What would you do if a good customer got upset over the phone?"

"That did happen to me when I worked as the bookkeeper for Hawkeye Medical Practice. An **elderly patient was upset** that she had gotten a **second billing** for something she thought that her insurance company had already paid. By the time the call was passed on to me she was frantic. She thought her insurance would not cover her and that she would have to pay the bill.

I listened carefully to her problem, answered her questions as well as I could, and agreed to look into it more for her. I told her that I would call her back, and I did. She was **much calmer** by the time the first phone call ended. **I looked into the situation** with the insurance company, I was **able to find an error** made by the insurance company and **got them to fix it quickly**. She sent me a thank you note. It took very **little time on my part, but I fixed the error and left a valued customer happy.**"

Select one of the questions above and write a key word response. Pick the question you think would you be LEAST comfortable with in an interview.

Possible interview questions to prepare for

1. Why did you choose your particular field of work?
2. What do you think determines a person's progress in a good job?
3. What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
4. How long do you expect to work here?
5. Define cooperation?
6. What types of people are difficult for you to get along with?
7. What jobs have you enjoyed the most? The least? Why?
8. What are your own special abilities?
9. What kind of supervisor gets the best performance from you?
10. Some people are short-tempered and impatient in their reactions. How would you describe yourself?
11. How do you feel about your career progress to date?
12. Tell me about your past job. What were your key responsibilities? What did you find most challenging?
13. What frustrates you about your job?

14. How many hours per day do you think a person should spend on his/her job?
15. What do you feel is an acceptable attendance record?
16. Do you arrive at work on time?
17. What do you think are your strengths? Weaknesses?
18. How did your supervisor treat others in your department?
19. What is unique about you?
20. What have you done that indicates you are qualified for this job?
21. Do you have any questions?
22. Describe your education as it applies to this position. What were the relevant courses and what did they entail?
23. How well did you do in school? In what areas were you particularly successful and in which areas were you less successful?
24. Would you describe your previous job in terms of the duties you performed? How would they relate to the position we've been discussing?
25. What types of computers, office machines, etc. do you operate?
26. What kinds of people do you generally encounter in your job?
27. Are these encounters generally positive and satisfying?
28. How much independence were you given on your last job? Tell me about how you used it?
29. What types of problems might you anticipate if you came to work in this department? How do you think you might deal with them?
30. What aspects of your job did you like the most? The least? Why did you want to leave that job?
31. What other questions do you have?

Questions you may ask the interviewer

Most interviews will end with the employer asking if you have questions. This question is often used to determine how interested you are in the position, and how much thought you have given to the interview. Listen carefully to the employer's answers, you can learn even more about the organization you hope to join. Following are questions you can ask at the interview.

1. I understand this is a _____ position. Could you tell me a little more about what I'll be doing on the job? What is an average day like?
2. In general, what type of person does your company usually hire?
3. Where will I be working?
4. How do I compare with the other applicants you have seen?
5. When do you need someone to start work?
6. When do you plan to make your decision?
7. What is the hiring process here? Will there be a second interview?
8. Would it be possible to have a tour of the office or plant?
9. Have you interviewed inside employees?
10. How many people are you interviewing?
11. Who would be my direct supervisor?
12. Does this company offer any benefits such as medical insurance?
13. Are tools or specific uniforms required?
14. (If known) What is the salary range for this position?
15. May I call you? I will be seeking employment and would hate to miss your call.

Whenever possible, try to link your questions to topics that arose during the interview. For example: "Earlier, we discussed my short and long term goals. How do those fit in with the goals of your organization?"

Close the interview by asking for the job or a time when you can call back to check.